

Agenda item: 

**Decision maker:** Cabinet Member for Planning, Regeneration and Economic Development - 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2015 and for information purposes only the Cabinet Member for Traffic and Transportation - 18<sup>th</sup> June 2015

**Subject:** Public Realm Strategy - Supplementary Planning Document

**Report by:** City Development Manager

**Wards affected:** All

**Key decision (over £250k):** No

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## 1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval to create a Public Realm Strategy - supplementary planning document (SPD).

## 2. Recommendations

**It is recommended that the Cabinet Member for Planning, Regeneration and Economic Development authorises the City Development Manager (in conjunction with the Transport, Environment and Business Support service) to create a Public Realm Strategy - supplementary planning document and to report back a draft document for formal public consultation.**

## 3. Background

- 3.1 The definition of 'Public Realm' can include roads, streets, pedestrian routes, cycleways, publicly accessible open spaces such as parks and squares, and spaces between and around buildings.
- 3.2 The quality of the public realm is widely acknowledged as being essential to the creation of environments that people wish to live and work in.
- 3.3 The National Planning Policy Framework<sup>1</sup> (NPPF) stresses the importance of good design and that is '*important to plan positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design for all development, including individual buildings, public and private spaces and wider area development schemes*' and that local planning policies and decisions should '*establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit*'.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/policy/>

- 3.4 The Planning Practice Guidance<sup>2</sup> also states that street design is important as *'successful streets are those where traffic and other activities have been integrated successfully, and where buildings and spaces, and the needs of people, not just of their vehicles, shape the area'*.
- 3.5 In addition, it states *'in many cases shortcomings in street design reflect the rigid application of highway engineering standards in terms of road hierarchies, junction separation distances, sight lines and turning radii for service vehicles. The result is often a sense of sprawl and formlessness and development which contradicts some of the key principles of urban design.'*
- Each street should be considered as unique – understand its location, character and eccentricities.*
- Every element of the street scene contributes to the identity of the place, including for example lighting, railings, litter bins, paving, fountains and street furniture. These should be well designed and sensitively placed. Unnecessary clutter and physical constraints such as parking bollards and road humps should be avoided. Street clutter is a blight, as the excessive or insensitive use of traffic signs and other street furniture has a negative impact on the success of the street as a place'*.
- 3.6 This is also supported by guidelines<sup>3,4,5,6</sup> produced by the Department for Transport (DfT) and Chartered Institution of Highways & Transportation (CIHT) which recognise the importance of 'placemaking' in the design of highways.
- 3.7 Creating a 'strong sense of place' and high quality design in the public realm not only contributes to economic growth (such as encouraging greater economic activity and increase in property values), there is growing evidence that an improved public realm offers an array of other social, environmental and health related benefits<sup>7,8,9,10</sup>. Whilst these other benefits are difficult to quantify they are important considerations in the way the council seeks to shape the public realm within the city.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/>

<sup>3</sup> Manual for Streets, DCLG and DFT, 2007 - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/manual-for-streets>.

<sup>4</sup> Manual for Streets 2: Wider Application of the Principles, CIHT, 2010 - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/manual-for-streets-2>.

<sup>5</sup> Designing for Walking, CIHT, March 2015 - <http://www.ciht.org.uk/en/knowledge/streets-and-transport-in-the-urban-environment.cfm>.

<sup>6</sup> Designing for Cycling, CIHT, October 2014 - <http://www.ciht.org.uk/en/knowledge/streets-and-transport-in-the-urban-environment.cfm>.

<sup>7</sup> [www.publicrealm.info](http://www.publicrealm.info)

<sup>8</sup> The Social and Emotional Benefits of Good Street Design, Brighton & Hove City Council and CIVITAS, August 2011.

<sup>9</sup> The Social Value of Public Spaces (Ref: 2050), Joseph Rowntree Foundation. [www.jrf.org.uk](http://www.jrf.org.uk)

<sup>10</sup> [www.livingstreets.org.uk](http://www.livingstreets.org.uk)

- 3.8 Existing council masterplans and other planning documents, such as the Hard and Seafront supplementary planning documents and Conservation Area guidelines, already provide guidance on the 'public realm' in some of the key and historical areas of the city. The purpose of this new strategy will be to consolidate the existing guidance and identify other opportunities to contribute to the delivery of the city's public realm vision.
- 3.9 The document will set out best practice principles and guidance for developments to ensure high quality design of the public realm. The guidelines will also be designed to help anyone who works in the city's public realm.
- 3.10 The document will be created as a supplementary planning document and once adopted it will be used as material consideration in the assessment of any planning application. As well being used in the development management process, the document will also be used internally by the council to ensure a consistently high standard of development, to provide joint design and maintenance guidance for all works within the public realm and help to prioritise council spending and investment.
- 3.11 The document will be developed in conjunction with various services within the council (such as the Local Highway Authority and PFI contractor), other key stakeholders and interested parties (such as public transport providers, local cycle forum and local disability forum).

#### **4. Reasons for recommendations**

- 4.1 The purpose of the draft Public Realm Strategy will be to establish a coordinated, consistent and high quality approach to all work in the public realm and in particular to:
- articulate a vision for the city to encourage investment;
  - set out the background and context for public realm proposals;
  - provide a framework of guidance within which to assess proposals for development (including being a material consideration in the determination of planning applications) and other improvements, and
  - prioritise council spending and investment.

#### **5. Equality impact assessment (EIA)**

- 5.1 Not applicable. Although, please note the draft document, which will be reported back at a later date, will be subject to a preliminary EIA.

#### **6. Legal Implications**

- 6.1 At this initial stage of reference to the portfolio holder, the item explaining the background to a proposal to draft a supplementary planning document is not subject to regulation. It is a sensible measure for explaining why the item is being introduced to the programme of work.

**7. Finance comments**

- 7.1 The work associated with the development of a Public Realm Strategy will be carried out within existing service budgets.
- 7.2 Any additional costs associated with the implementation of this strategy will be detailed in the Public Realm Strategy - Supplementary Planning Document which will be brought to a future meeting prior to public consultation.

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 Signed by:  
 City Development Manager

**Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972**

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

<b>Title of document</b>	<b>Location</b>
Portsmouth Plan, January 2012	Copies are available from the City Development Team or at <a href="http://www.portsmouth.gov.uk">www.portsmouth.gov.uk</a>
The Hard - supplementary planning document, June 2012	Copies are available from the City Development Team or at <a href="http://www.portsmouth.gov.uk">www.portsmouth.gov.uk</a>
City Centre Masterplan - supplementary planning document, January 2013	Copies are available from the City Development Team or at <a href="http://www.portsmouth.gov.uk">www.portsmouth.gov.uk</a>
Seafront Masterplan - supplementary planning document, April 2013	Copies are available from the City Development Team or at <a href="http://www.portsmouth.gov.uk">www.portsmouth.gov.uk</a>

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved / approved as amended / deferred / rejected

by ..... on .....

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 Signed by: